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HOLLY AND LAUREL

For a long time it has been evident to those of us who live in large cities that unless something was done to save the American Holly, there would soon be none left to be saved. Many of us stopped buying Holly, at least ten years ago, and have used artificial or natural substitutes. Excellent imitations of Poinsettia and Holly may be had, and these do not shrivel and grow shabby so soon, and may be used again and again in different combinations. Many of the large shops use artificial wreaths because they keep better than the natural ones, look handsomer, and may be used again another year. Garlands of laurel are not used as much as formerly because the use of ropes of laurel and ground pine has been so cheapened and abused that people of good taste no longer take pleasure in this form of decoration. But that there is entirely too much laurel roping still used cannot be denied. However, we may take comfort and consolation in the fact that, though there is no good substitute for the laurel, we are told by the State foresters of Connecticut that it may be grown with profit as a crop, and that on many rocky and waste pastures in that state it will pay better than any other crop.

Mrs. Farrand states in her article on "Christmas Greens" that "we are most of us to blame through ignorance, because we do not know that one thin and poor yard of laurel-roping uses up at least twenty growths of one year each, and that over thirty are needed to make the pretty, thick strands we all have liked to buy. A good wreath of Holly is made up of an average of two years' growth. The cases of Holly sold in all the large florists' shops and market at Christmas time measure approximately three feet long and two feet wide and at least two feet high: each of these boxes contain a minimum of six hundred years of growth. It is therefore not difficult to understand why Holly has been practically exterminated from the State of Connecticut and is growing difficult to find in New Jersey and nearby States."

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The Century Dictionary gives 36 names of places in which the word Holly occurs, and its range in the eastern part of the United States—from Maine to Florida, and westward to Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Texas—would seem to assure us that Holly was formerly abundant and widely distributed in the Eastern States. It has disappeared almost entirely from the Northern States and is rapidly diminishing in the Southern; all that comes to market is obtained from wild plants, and much of it is taken without the consent of the owners.



Holly plants, 2, 3, and 4 years old grown from seeds sown in January.

We are advocating the replanting of Holly from seeds by everyone who uses Holly for Christmas decorations, and the growing of Holly from cuttings by dealers to supply the ever-growing demand for living plants. Bailey, in the Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture, says that the seeds do not germinate until the second year, that young seedlings should be transplanted after they are two years old, and that all or nearly all, of the leaves should be stripped off from *Ilex opaca* and *I.*

aquifolium when transplanted—particularly if at all exposed to wind and sun—as it is absolutely necessary to insure success. Holly will stand a certain amount of shade and can be planted without stripping off the leaves. At the New York Botanical Garden we have germinated the fruits taken from a hardy tree in the fruticetum in 8 months by planting them early in January in a mixture of sand and leaf-mould. Friends tell me that when planted in pots with their house plants, they can grow them readily from berries that have been used at Christmas-time, and in a few cases, those thrown out-of-doors have germinated.

Fortunately for us all, we shall not have to give up the use of this symbolic decoration for long, for in Oregon they are growing the European Holly commercially; there are many Holly farms near Portland, Oregon, and opportunity to raise enough of it to supply the nation. Many follow the custom of selling their surplus Holly, and florists will trim trees and hedges properly and buy the cuttings. These sell for a dollar a pound and are shipped to Chicago and New York. The moist and equable climate of the west coast from British Columbia to California is so similar to that of England that all the delicate and variegated varieties of *Ilex aquifolia* flourish, the English and Dutch, those with the silver and gold margined leaves, and the variety known as *Aurea regina*. In comparison with the Holly native on the Atlantic Coast, the leaves of all these varieties are much more dense and glossy, the spines more sharply pointed, and the berries are borne in clusters—on the whole, a much more durable and decorative species and one that is ultimately bound to supplant our own *Ilex opaca*, as this diminishes and *I. aquifolia* increases in abundance. But for the sake of “Auld Lang Syne” and the birds, let us grow our own Holly and create a demand for living plants by refusing to buy cut Holly!

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